

Excerpt from:

Romo, A. (2025). *School Safety or Racial Surveillance? What the Data Says About School Resource Officers in Toronto*. [Unpublished working paper]. Retrieved from <https://aliceromo.com/research/>

Policing, Youth Arrests & Racial Disparities in Toronto

A report from the Toronto Police Services released their findings on the race-based data they collected on police use of force reports and for persons strip searched as per mandates from Ontario's 2017 Anti-Racism Act requiring public institutions to collect race-based data. It was confirmed that Black residents made up 39% of the people involved in police use of force incidents in 2020 with self identified Toronto Black residents only making up 10.2% of the population (Toronto Police Service, 2022). It is now irrefutable that Black residents face more violence from police in the city of Toronto than any other racial demographic in the city. This is an alarming statistical finding for any school district in Canada continuing to include a School Resource Officer program in their schools or considering including a daily police program in their schools.

Literature from the US, now include statistical correlational findings that points to increase rates of arrests when placing police in schools, with rates being particularly higher for Black students (Homer & Fisher, 2020). Could this be the case for Canada? Some descriptive statistics in Toronto can show these possible trends.

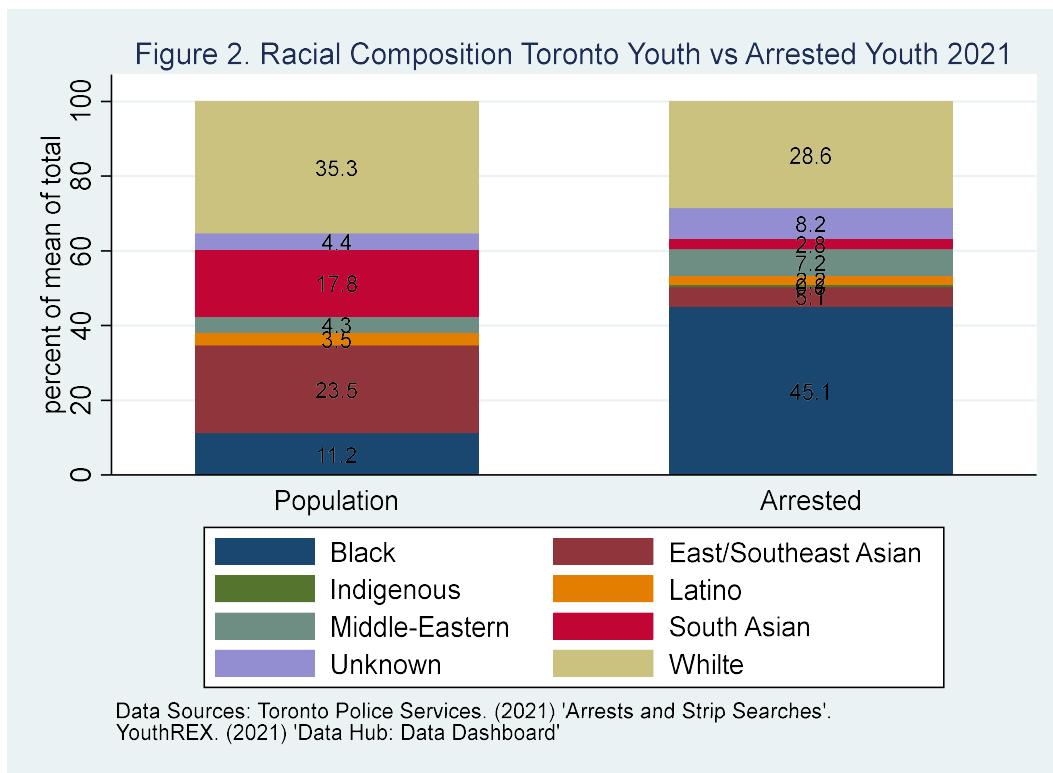


Figure 2 shows that Black Youth represent 45% of Youth arrested in 2021 yet made up 11% of the Toronto Youth population in the same year. Middle-Eastern youth made up 7% of the youth arrests in 2021 but only represented 4% of Toronto Youth population in 2021.

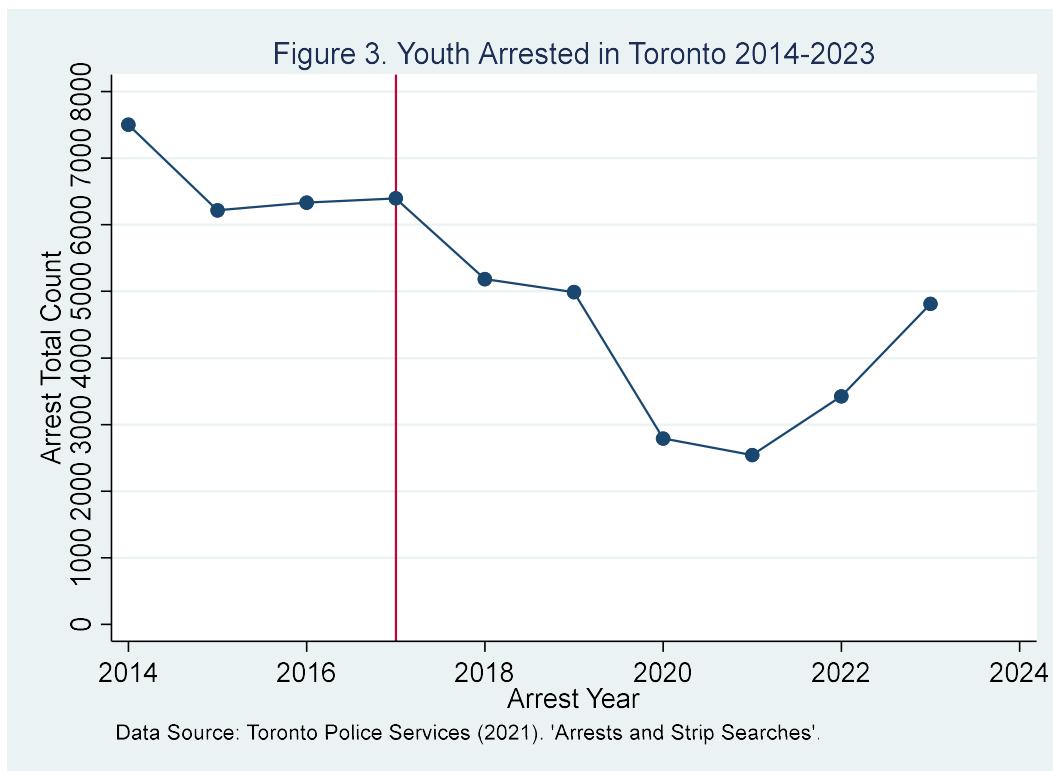
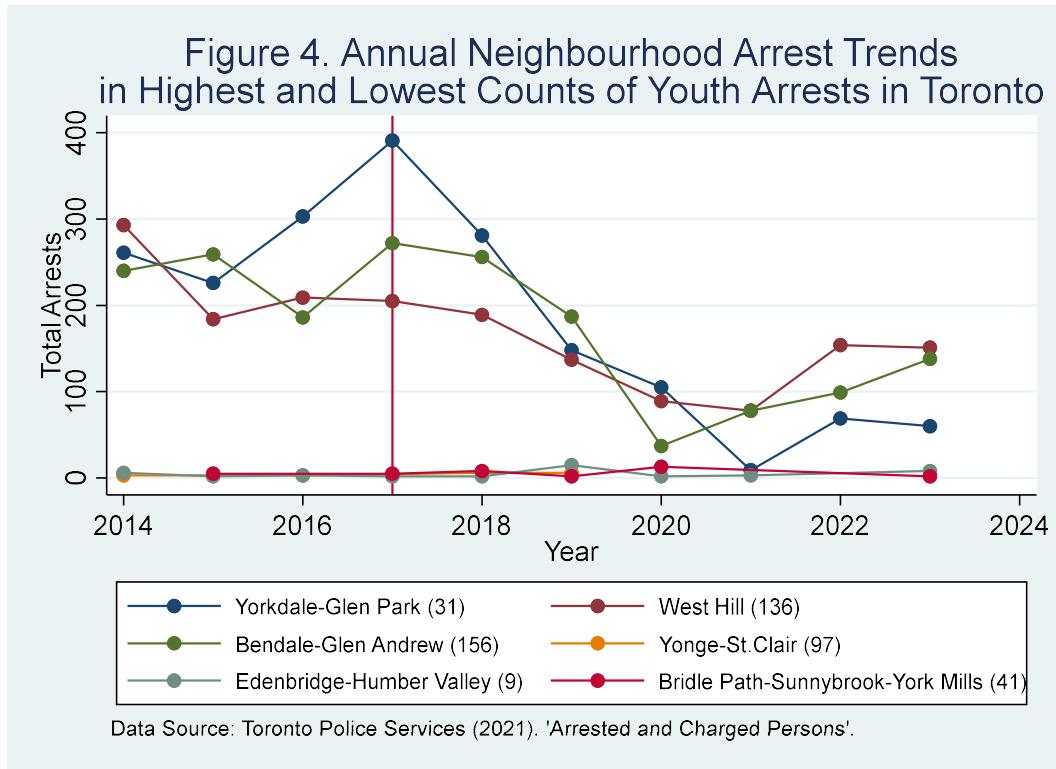


Figure 3 Shows Youth arrested in Toronto over time with $x=2017$ displayed for reference, which is the year the SRO program ended in the TDSB. There is a general trend of lower youth arrests over time. We can also see a sharp dip from 2020 to 2022 where likely the arrest counts were far lower during COVID-19 pandemic lock downs. However, we can also see that the arrest count plotted looks steeper after 2017 which may indicate a relationship between the removal of police in schools and youth arrest rates in Toronto.



In Figure 4, youth arrest counts were additionally plotted by neighbourhood overtime and we can see the same general trend as table 2 but a much sharper difference after 2017 in priority neighbourhoods. SROs were specifically placed in priority neighbourhoods across the city.

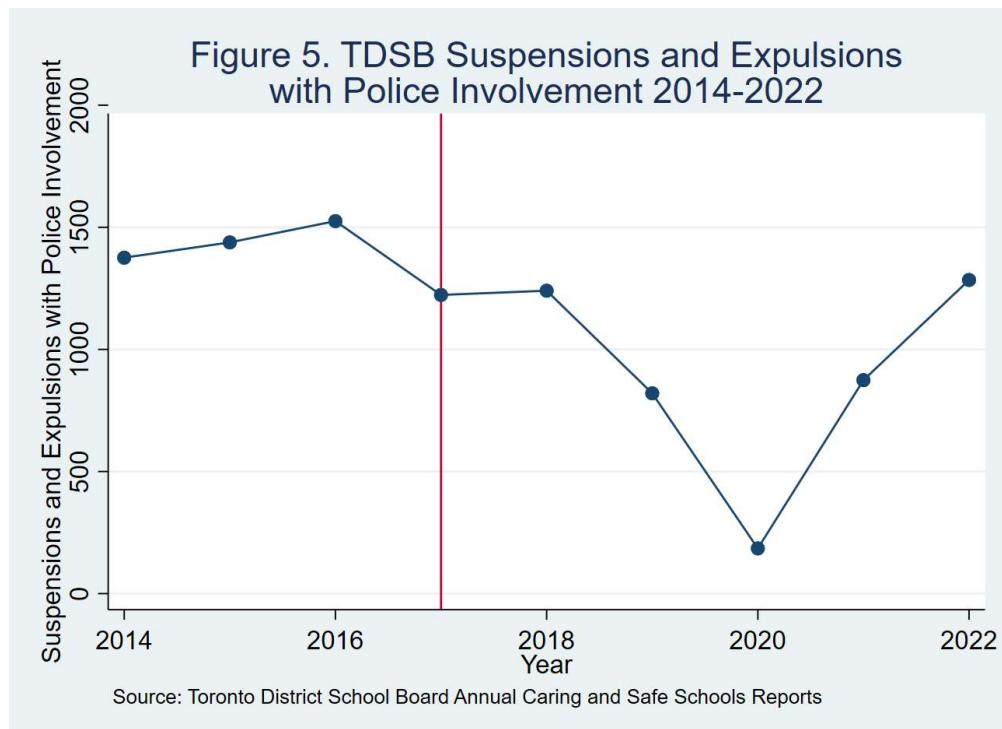


Figure 5 shows plotted total counts of suspensions and expulsions with police involvement over time. Excluding years 2019 to 2021 where the pandemic would affect overall disciplinary counts, police involvement with school discipline also seems to have dropped after 2017 with the removal of SROs.

These descriptive statistics point to possible trends with policing in schools and youth arrests, taking into account what we know already from previous literature on this topic in the US. Further modelling to test this can make this correlation more conclusive.

References

Homer, E. M., & Fisher, B. W. (2020). Police in schools and student arrest rates across the United States: Examining differences by race, ethnicity, and gender. *Journal of School Violence*, 19(2), 192–204. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15388220.2019.1604377>

Toronto Police Service. (2022). *Race & Identity Based Data collection Strategy: Understanding Use of Force & Strip Searches in 2020.*

<https://www.scribd.com/document/578462243/Toronto-police-report-on-systemic-racism-in-officer-use-of-force-and-strip-searches>